

## Painted Fingertips by [iamatheatrekid](#)

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Good Sibling Nancy Wheeler, Lesbian Mike Wheeler, Trans Female Mike Wheeler, Trans Mike Wheeler, idk what else to tag, mike realizes she's trans and nancy paints her nails

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Karen Wheeler, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler

**Relationships:** Mike Wheeler & Nancy Wheeler

**Status:** Completed

**Published:** 2021-06-24

**Updated:** 2021-06-24

**Packaged:** 2022-03-31 13:54:49

**Rating:** Not Rated

**Warnings:** No Archive Warnings Apply

**Chapters:** 1

**Words:** 1,596

**Publisher:** [archiveofourown.org](https://archiveofourown.org)

**Summary:**

Mike doesn't want to wear dress pants and a tie in their family picture and Nancy doesn't understand why. But knows a trip down memory lane and painting her little brother's nails might open it up.

## Painted Fingertips

### Author's Note:

sorry i have not been able to stop thinking of trans! fem mike. there's more where this came from

Also, this is pre-transition for Mike and even pre-realization, so the fic is written with entirely he/him pronouns for Mike. Again, though, I will be writing more (in this universe and adjacent) so we'll get some she/her up in here soon!

They had agreed on what Mike was going to wear and now his mother was changing her mind. Jeans and a blue button up shirt. That was the deal. But after finding a cute yellow and blue dress for Holly at the department store, now Mike's outfit for family pictures wasn't formal enough. As if they'd change everyone else's outfits because of a dress Mike found.

Nancy didn't understand it. He was fourteen years old and yelling at his mom over wearing a tie and dress pants. They were just clothes and it was just a picture that would be hanging in their living room and go on their family Christmas cards. But this was the charm of her little brother.

"Michael, just try on the damn pants." Karen tried lowering her voice to see if it'd make a difference, but Mike went back to yelling, "No! Why can't I wear the jeans!"

"You're not wearing blue jeans with a blue shirt in our family pictures."

"Then I'll wear black jeans!"

"No, Michael!" She was having a hard time maintaining a calm exposure. "You are not wearing jeans in the family picture, I want you to look nice."

Mike went to open his mouth again, but with a raise of her hand she

cut him off. "End of discussion."

He stormed up the stairs with his shirt and tie and dress pants balled into his hands and slammed the door.

Nancy waited in her own room to hear music blaring like what usually happened when he fought with their mom, but instead she heard silence.

She was still his sister no matter how ridiculous he was being and she was somehow drawn to wandering over to the door and tapping her nail against the wood. It couldn't just be the clothes, it had to be something else.

"What?" He snapped back, clearly trying to make it sound like he wasn't crying.

She popped her head in and whispered, "It's just me, Mike."

He was sitting against his bed, on the side furthest from the door, so he had been faced away from her. But she could still see his thick black hair pooling out of the top of his head. He had begged and begged to not get it cut at the beginning of the school year and it was trailing well down his neck now, making Nancy wonder if their mom was also now going to make him cut it for their pictures.

"What do you want?" He still held up his tough and angry facade, and Nancy knew he was angry; she just didn't think it was over the stupid dress pants.

"I just wanted to check on you," she said. "Quite the battle with Mom downstairs."

"Yeah, well it's none of your business."

"It is my business if it's making you upset." She closed the door behind her as she stepped further into his room. It wasn't as messy as she expected, not as messy as the basement, but there were still clothes aggravatingly thrown onto the floor in the way that his nice clothes were on his bed.

She picked up the pants and unfurled them, laying them out on his

bed flat. "They're nice pants," she hummed. Mike only scoffed. "Why don't you want to wear them?"

"Because."

"Because why?"

"They don't fit me."

Nancy scrunched her face up. "Well, we can get you a new size."

"No," he frustratedly sighed, pulling his hands up to his hair. "They don't *fit* me."

"Oh, like they don't match your style? Your cool nerd boy persona?"

Mike sighed again, his hands now pushed into his eyes. Nancy rounded the corner of the bed to see her brother sitting on the carpet with his knees pulled up to his chest. She sat down beside him, her head not reaching the top on the bed.

"It's just a picture," she said softly.

"You don't get it."

She turned to face him even though he was in no way wanting to look back at her. "How don't I get it?"

"How'd you feel if Mom made you wear pants in the family picture?"

Nancy looked at him funny. "I guess I wouldn't like it," she said.

Mike nodded to himself, but still didn't turn to look at her. Nancy saw the gold chain of a necklace poking out from under the collar of Mike's shirt. He was twirling his fingers around themselves and Nancy was remembering back to when he was four and she used to paint his nails.

They used to be a tag team, Nancy getting Mike shoved over to her to watch over and him dutifully following behind everything she would do. They'd sit at the dining room table together while their mom made dinner with coloring pages and toy cars and the beginnings of

sewed together pillow cases that Nancy was ever so patiently teaching her brother how to sew.

When Nancy bought her first bottle of nail polish with her allowance, she used the entire bottle in two months, touching up every chip the minute they came up. And painting her brother's nails once a week.

Mike would softly watched her and copied her in the routine of painting the fresh navy blue color on, blowing on them to dry, and then using her hands in the way fancy girls did in movies. He would use marker to color on his fingers, but then Nancy offered him the real deal.

"Do you remember when I used to paint your nails?" She asked him. "And then dad would make you take it off before soccer practice?"

He nodded. "I remember."

"Do you want me to paint them again?"

He shrugged. "I'd just have to take it off again. I don't want to waste your stuff."

"Who said you'd have to take it off?"

Mine finally looked at her, stunned. His eyes were still as glassy with tears as she imagined they'd be, but they stared at her with confusion.

"What?" She said. "You don't have soccer practice tomorrow." She got up from her spot on the floor and went back to her room, hearing Mike stumble to follow, too excited.

He sat on her bed, awkward on top on her nice satin comforter, but still letting his fingers run along it while she grabbed her nail polish. She had them all in a little wooden case organized by color. Mostly soft nude pinks and dark blues with a few brighter purples and oranges thrown in.

Mike found the one she was wearing, a pink shade, and decided he wanted something different. He picked out a blue, close to the one he wore for hours at a time as a child.

The feeling wasn't anything revolutionary as it was painted onto his flat nails. Just cold, but Mike couldn't draw his eyes away from it. Nancy held his hands delicately and he was able to feel some small rings situated on her fingers as his nails finished.

She did the entire first hand in silence, which Mike chose to hold up to his face and marvel at once she was done and moving onto the next hand. It made the wheels in Nancy's head turn even more than they already were.

"Are you gay?" She asked softly.

"No."

She nodded, not wanting to show on her face that she was disappointed. She wasn't disappointed necessarily, but that was a very easy explanation for painting her little brother's nails. "I was just wondering."

"I think I want to be a girl sometimes," Mike said instead. Which was a lot farther than what Nancy could've possibly considered. She nodded again as her mind worked through that.

But before she was able to fill in any blank spots, Mike was nervously rambling. "I mean, of course I'm not, I'm a boy, I just sometimes, you know, think that--"

"You could be a girl on the inside. Like your brain works like a girl's but your body just doesn't match," Nancy suggested.

When Mike looked at her with a dropped mouth, she wasn't looking at him. Only the nails. They sat in silence until Nancy thought to look up at him. "What?" She asked in a laugh to his wide eyes.

"Are you sure?" He asked.

"Yeah I'm sure."

He ducked his head back down, thinking. "So?" Nancy prompted. "Are you a girl?"

Mike shrugged. Nancy rolled her eyes and got off the bed, opening

her closet door. She turned back to her brother and gave him a sly smile. “Do you want to play dress up?”

If Mike was a girl, he wasn’t an overly girly girl. He put on a lilac sweater that fit his small frame and kept on his own jeans. He wore some of Nancy’s jewelry, rings and necklaces, and only held earrings up to his ears. She straightened his hair to see how long it could get—it went down just past his shoulders.

She even wiped some clear lip glass on his lips and mascara on his eyelashes. Mike looked like a girl.

“Yeah,” she said, standing in the mirror.

“Yeah?” Nancy asked.

“This is it.”

“So?” Nancy asked, her voice small. “You’re my little sister?”

“You already have a little sister.”

“Jesus, you know what I mean.”

Mike shrugged again. “I guess.”

Nancy smiled at her. “Well, you’re a very pretty girl.”

“So, I can keep the sweater?” Mike asked with a sneaky grin.

“Sure,” Nancy sighed. “But we need to get you some of your own stuff, too.”